

What can employers do to provide a more inclusive work environment for Muslim staff?

Employment Law News

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With Ramadan starting this evening, BDBF Senior Associate, [Theo Nicou](#) considers the Muslim Council of Britain's Ramadan Guide which provides recommendations on what employers can do to provide a more inclusive work environment for Muslim staff.

What adaptations can employers implement for Ramadan?

- Be open to having a discussion with employees who are fasting but don't assume that all employees want to be treated differently because they are fasting.
- Consider letting staff finish earlier if they are working through any break times.
- Be accommodating to annual leave requests, in particular for employees wanting time off to celebrate Eid ul Fitr festival, marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan.
- Be flexible in allowing employees to have breaks for afternoon prayers and, if possible, provide a prayer or quiet space.

What cultural considerations should employers be aware of and what everyday adaptations can they make?

- Employers should be aware of cultural differences around handshaking and direct eye contact. The placing of a hand on heart (instead of a handshake between genders)

in greeting is practiced in many Muslim communities and seen as a highly respectful act, as is Muslim men lowering their gaze when interacting with women, another marker of utmost respect and means of maintaining a modest disposition.

- Take into consideration how dress codes and uniforms can incorporate headscarves should a Muslim member of staff wear it and provide hair nets or masks if there are health and safety considerations regarding beards.
- Look into including halal and/or kosher (as it is also permissible for Muslims to eat) food and vegetarian dishes in canteens or whenever food or snacks are provided for staff.
- Offer a range of activities designed to appeal to everyone, dedicated to building rapport between staff from different backgrounds. Muslim staff may not socialise in pubs, for example, so consider events in the social calendar that will accommodate for this difference in sensibilities.

Closing thoughts

Inclusivity is key to ensuring a happy and productive workforce. A number of the above practical changes are easy to implement but could go a long way to foster a more welcoming work environment for Muslim staff.

BDBF is a leading law firm based at Bank in the City of London specialising in employment law. If you would like to discuss any issues relating to the content of this article, please contact Theo Nicou (theonicou@bdbf.co.uk) or your usual BDBF contact.

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